

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to express their appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication that claims 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 12 contain allowable subject matter, on page 10 of the Official Action.

Upon entry of the above amendments claims 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 11 will have been amended, and claims 2, 7 and 12 will have been canceled. Claims 1, 3-6, 8-11 and 13 are currently pending. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding objections and rejections, and allowance of all the claims pending in the present application.

Applicants note that the subject matter of claim 2 (which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable) has been added to independent claim 1; the subject matter of claim 7 (which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable) has been added to independent claim 6; and the subject matter of claim 12 (which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable) has been added to independent claim 11. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request an early indication of the allowance of all of the pending claims.

On pages 4 and 5 of the Official Action, claims 1 and 4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

As noted above, claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of claim 2 (which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable), Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) is improper, and respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection, and an early indication of the allowance of these claims.

On page 6-9 of the Official Action, claims 6, 9, 11 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

As noted above, claim 6 has been amended to include the subject matter of claim 7 (which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable), and claim 11 has been amended to include the subject matter of claim 12 (which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable). Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) are improper, and respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections, and an early indication of the allowance of these claims.

COMMENTS ON REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

In regard to the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 12 on page 10 of the Official Action, Applicants do not disagree with the Examiner's indication that the prior art fails to disclose or render obvious various features of these claims. However, Applicants wish to make clear that the claims in the present application recite a combination of features, and that the patentability of these claims is also based on the totality of the features recited therein, which define over the prior art. Thus the reasons for allowance should not be limited to those mentioned by the Examiner.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

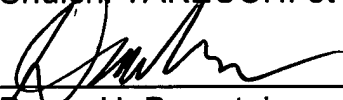
Entry and consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate.

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

Any amendments to the claims that have been made in this amendment, which do not narrow the scope of the claims, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered cosmetic in nature, and to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should there be any questions or comments, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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